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A Center of Beauty and Intellect

BY

ALEXIS LAWRENCE ROMANOFF

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Dedicated

TO THOSE who gave their wealth and will
To help the city to fulfill
Its longings, gain in worthy deeds —
Which grant to all constructive leads . . .

AND THOSE who live in earnest trust,
And toil in service, nobly, just,
With aim to show the rightful way
Of social force — which here will stay.

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PROLOGUE

In earnest youth, some years ago,
The author came to this small town.
It was his fate; he did not know
That he for long would settle down.

At once, he saw enchanting hills,
Not far, deep blue Cayuga Lake.
Each bush, each tree man's hope fulfills
By keeping Nature green, awake.

There is tranquility and peace
Along the stretch of shady streets,
A scent of culture — ancient Greece —
From college heights, where youth competes.

The whole community has aims
To make the town a living place:
With study clubs, artistic claims . . .
All human values to embrace.

Its most inspiring atmosphere
No thoughtful visitor forgets.
Here one resides, and holds it dear . . .
His life is full, without regrets.

Part I - *Natural Environment*

BETWEEN HILLS AND LAKE

The town is locked in hills around,
Except for narrow northern strip
Of lake, which takes a vantage ground —
By strong attraction holds its grip.

From heights there is an open view
Of hidden homes, protruding spires . . .
Each season's hues appear anew
In their elaborate attires.

From heights one sees exciting scenes:
The thrusting end of lengthened lake,
Which takes the eye from rising greens —
In deathly calm, or stormy wake.

All hills have their historic course,
Project into the city flats . . .
The lake has also subtle force . . .
Both, Nature's born aristocrats.

Thus, hills and lake well dominate
Surrounding beauty — unadorned —
But have an overwhelming weight
On those who come here unforewarned.

EAST HILL

There is a dominating hill —
The one which faces on the east;
In both its grandeur, human will,
It gives men zeal, divides them least.

The buildings climbing toward the skies,
A lighted tower in the night . . .
Have been delights for catching eyes,
Directing to the learning site.

The daily chimes can all remind
About its kingdom built for youth,
Embracing knowledge of mankind
With high respect for guiding truth.

This gleaming hill is widely known
In every corner of the Earth;
It holds a foremost school, now grown
Into tradition, by its birth.

It is a hill of youthful dreams.
With rising sun above the ground
It sets anew constructive themes
Which, further on, may far resound.

SOUTH HILL

This hill, through years, has grown to fame
By industry's ascending trade
In noiseless chains, machines . . . which claim
A worldwide market of high grade.

Illuminated buildings stand
Like rocks upon the terraced slope —
They take the city's upper hand,
Give working men a living, hope . . .

Behind tall trees — obscured from view —
Evolved a campus, long-range plan
Of growing college, on high cue —
From early days it overran.

It came to being as a school,
With its great heritage in art:
Dramatics, music — teachers' pool
In which it plays important part.

South Hill thus has its future, chance
To face the east hill with real pride,
To be its sister, radiance
Of culture, knowledge — city's guide.

WEST HILL

West Hill has been a sheltered spot —
 Of early settlers, well to do —
Exclusive, pleasant social lot,
 Near city flats, in open view.

The busy stations — welcome sight
 In times of railroads' noble reign —
Loud whistles, roar . . . of country's might,
 Were soothing scenes with every train.

This hill projected lustrous taste
 Until bold ventures brought new flow
Of men with wealth — to turn the waste
 Into prosperity . . . and show.

The wooded slopes conceal decay
 Of mansions which can disappear,
Give way to schools and streets — to stay,
 And small communities to rear.

To meet the modern growing trend,
 Escaping city border lines
Along the lake, without an end,
 The shady hill has hopeful signs.

NORTH HILLS

The northern reaches of the town
Command a view of high up shores
Of Lake Cayuga — holding crown
Of many fascinating lores.

These hills extend for forty miles,
And vanish at the other end
In swampy lands — wild refuge isles
For beasts and birds whom men defend.

The west shore has productive soil
With orchards, vineyards, flowers, corn . . .
Attracts good farmers, pays for toil . . .
And country life it can adorn.

The east shore turned to Nature's waste:
Befitting gentlemen's fair life —
Among the trees and rocks . . . man's taste
Without ambition, gainful strife.

These shores direct a constant breeze
From west to east, along the dales:
Through summer heat and winter freeze
To residents it never fails.

CAYUGA LAKE

Among the longest Finger Lakes
Cayuga holds the highest prize;
Its southern end with wind awakes
The city, slopes, without disguise.

Recession of the great ice age
Slow gave its way to valleys, flats . . .
Reclaiming process filled the page
Of history . . . made habitats.

It served as navigation point —
A terminal of far-flung seas;
Great Lakes became its major joint
For water trade of industries.

Today, it plays a canny role:
In pleasure boating, yachting trips
Through lakes for open ocean stroll —
Near shores, in view of passing ships.

The city saw the Lake's past fame —
Inherent from the native tribes
Of Indians who gave their name,
But lost to settlers . . . took no bribes.

CITY FLATS

In Ithaca one is surprised
To find a level tract of land,
Although it is all well disguised —
Lake bottom filled with clay and sand.

In all directions, by short blocks,
One is relieved from slopes and hills;
Not far from rough-ridged interlocks
One finds a rest from Nature's thrills.

To some extent, one feels here squeezed
By heights encroaching from all sides;
And also, he may feel much eased —
Protected from the weather's tides.

With churches, homes . . . the flats are drowned
Within wide-branching, lofty trees,
Which meet esteem, will stay as crowned
By Latin names, and pedigrees.

The flats became the heart of life:
With business section, lighted streets,
A place of trade — and earthly strife . . .
Away from scholarly retreats.

SURROUNDING SLOPES

Of course, the city now is bound —
 Beyond the level of the lake —
By rising hills, which are renowned . . .
 Which keep the valleys, heights awake.

Among communities today
 Cayuga Heights is on East Hill,
A model of the cultured way —
 In progress it is never still.

Another place is College Town,
 Where many live, and students shop;
From here, if one is glancing down,
 He feels that he is on the top.

At dark, from hills, one sees around
 All slopes to Ithaca, in light:
A big, flat-bottomed bowl, abound
 With starry sides encircling tight.

From flats are radiating roads
 Along ravines and gentle slopes,
Where cars, with passengers and loads,
 Appear like snakes, or twisted ropes.

CREEKS AND WATERFALLS

Through all surrounding rough terrain
There are but hills, ravines, and creeks,
And two great valleys fully reign
With growth of population peaks.

Ravines are often narrow, deep —
Disclose striation of the soil;
From side to side high bridges leap,
From which one sees the ages' toil.

Grooved bottoms hold cascading streams
With waterfalls, and broken dams —
The remnants of the past — fond dreams
To furnish energy by jams.

The glens have now been turned to parks
For scaling walks along each path;
The changing water-level marks
Produce great torrents' aftermath.

All these and other nearby grounds —
For recreation, thinking, rest —
Become for life one's forceful bounds,
And give him strength in goodness dressed.

ACCESSIBILITY

When public services decline
 Beyond good reason, civic need,
The small communities define
 Their stand, accept the modern speed.

Because of mountains, endless hills,
 Away from main cross-country roads,
This city faces certain thrills
 In transportation episodes.

The weather often changes plans
 Of each immediate concern;
Postponement, cancellations, bans . . .
 In winter may be very stern.

The autocar is one's best choice
 For easy getting in and out,
But not in cold — none can rejoice
 In icy drive — with safety doubt.

To have continued peace of mind,
 One must decide to come and stay
Here year around, and be confined
 With his good use of every day.

INVIGORATING CLIMATE

The city marks a border line
Between snow caps and tropic muds,
The northern fir and southern pine —
Away from storms and heavy floods.

The falls are known for foliage hues,
Have always pleasant, sunny days;
The most inviting distant views
Portray rich Nature's farewell ways.

The winters start with light wet snows —
Enough to be on guard for sleets;
Lakes seldom freeze for skating shows,
Nor have for skiing blanket sheets.

The springs come late — at first too slow —
With sudden spur of sweating heat,
Which gives at once excessive glow —
Allows no chance for quick retreat.

The summers bring sweet interchange
Of fleeting warmth and cooler days,
Which all unpleasantness estrange —
Suggest no other better ways.

SUMMER VACATIONLAND

If one will take into account
 All Nature's beauty, local parks
With waterfalls . . . it will surmount
 This place among the state-wide marks.

Within town limits, short slow drive
 Near moody, dark Cayuga Lake,
There are some views which none deprive
 Of chance to see, investigate.

Here one can have his heart's desire:
 A deep-pool swim, a cooling breeze,
Long walks in woods . . . which can aspire
 To health or sport — as one may please.

These winsome lulls can be combined
 With reading, meditation, dreams . . .
Or being scholarly, confined
 In libraries on worthy themes.

This interchange of work and rest
 Provides a useful summer time —
For youth, abilities to test
 And pave their roads for further climb.

Part II - *Cultural Atmosphere*

SPELLS IN ACTIVITIES

The city lives throughout the year
With noted active, tranquil spells:
Its population atmosphere
Can change from hives to silent shells.

It is alive through schooling time,
Up to the saturation mark,
With eager youths who aim to climb,
Discourse on streets, and in the park.

It seems that everyone can gain
From huge facilities at hand:
Of educated man domain,
And merchant service at command.

And then, asudden, comes recess;
Disperse of youth leaves empty shops;
This gives to all relief from stress . . .
But scholars gather long-range crops.

Through summers, Nature compensates
The missing elements of life
With birds and flowers — at one's gates —
With all the pleasurable strife.

INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

This city has its atmosphere:
 To be alert, have things to say,
Enjoy through learning, pioneer
 On jobs for pleasure, or for pay.

There are here many social clubs
 With membership exceeding space,
For men and women, free from snubs —
 By being models, set the pace.

The study groups — from high school up,
 To meet all fancies, ranks, and age —
Do flourish, earn a loving cup,
 And recognition of the sage.

For painting, writing, business, trade . . .
 Are classes formed, and led by men
Of knowledge, skill, desire for aid
 To each progressive citizen.

From every group, all those who learned —
 And many hold advanced degrees
With scholarship which they have earned —
 Enrich the city's pedigrees.

ARTISTIC HERITAGE

There is a bold artistic whim —
Projected from the college hills —
Which never lets the city dim,
Decline in its creative skill.

One sees exhibits in the park,
On sunny summer days, of oil
And water color paints — till dark —
Displaying artists' earnest toil.

Poetic works sometimes play parts,
Exposing taste for metric forms —
With lofty thoughts from open hearts,
Or indignation of great storms.

Sometimes in windows are displays
Of architectural designs;
Of city planning — modern ways;
Of sculptures — which no one defines.

The town is full of college songs,
And music, drama, ballet, dance . . .
Which keep the youth away from wrongs —
Let them in life make good advance.

WORLDLY CONTRIBUTIONS

The aggregated wits and brains,
Reflected by the college life,
Can give to strangers with sure gains
Some comfort, easiness for strife.

The foreign students from strange states
Contribute their commanding share
Of understanding, customs, traits
Which serve the city like fresh air.

The faculties here represent
The utmost knowledge — worldly wealth
In science, art . . . with high intent
For maintenance of public health.

Among them are the men of note —
With honors, money grants, Nobel
And other prizes — who promote
Their eminence, which none foretell.

The city plays its destined role
In education, probe of facts . . .
Fulfills the academic goal,
And industry's research contracts.

INCENTIVES FOR INVENTIONS

This city is for active minds —
Of some inherent introverts;
No better place one ever finds
When he creativeness asserts.

One learns of industries: their needs
For operation, saving time,
Increase of economic speeds —
With gain from each invested dime.

By use of libraries' vast means,
And college-fostered specialists,
One builds imaginary scenes,
Invents new things with novel twists.

There was a birth of noiseless chains,
Electric clocks, shot guns, machines . . .
And some of them still hold domains
Throughout the world, as reigning queens.

The college hills can radiate
A mighty mass of useful facts,
Which give encouragement and weight
To all who have the urge for acts.

RETREAT FOR ACTIVE MINDS

This town attracts hard-working folk —
With mental energy outlay —
Who do not gamble, drink, or smoke,
But welcome inner growth each day.

Some come to spend declining years
Close-by the culture on the hill —
Where future leaders, pioneers
Are trained to meet the country's will.

Some keep in touch with college life:
Frequent good lectures, music halls,
Preserve an active part in strife
With ignorance, and break its walls.

There are a few who cultivate
Their lifelong knowledge, matchless skill;
With fondest wish they dedicate
Themselves to being versatile.

This city grants the best retreat
To those who feel no peace on Earth —
Except with books which they find sweet
As melodies of lasting worth.

SELECTIVE TRADING

In this community, demands
Are high for goods of special choice;
All aim at only worthy brands —
The second best receive no voice.

All seek exclusive merchandise —
Of quality and pleasing styles;
It will not sell with compromise,
Nor bring the buyers with their smiles.

Thus merchants have selective stocks
Of clothing, shoes, and ladies' wear . . .
Inside of two or three short blocks
One fills his wish, or has despair.

New residents are often spoiled
By former living in a town
With fast turnover, goods unsoiled,
Excessive charges tumbled down . . .

This college town becomes a mart
Of fancy price and living cost . . .
All seem to take an active part
In keeping it in line — uncrossed.

USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The city profited with cash
From wealth above and underground;
Some riches made a noted splash,
Then disappeared — they were unsound.

In early days, its timber trees
Could make men fabulously rich,
And these not lasting industries
Left useless waste, an empty niche.

Then farmers came to claim the land
By razing stumps and bush by fire;
They made from it a fertile brand —
The virgin soil of great desire.

Through long continuing neglect
Fertility had disappeared;
And this unwise, man-made defect
Till present never has been cleared.

But salt rock found below the lake
Has made a lasting enterprise.
Cement, sand, gravel . . . are on wake —
Fill present orders of large size.

EXCLUSIVENESS WITH WISDOM

This town, a most exclusive place
Among the others of its size,
Has Nature's virgin beauty face
And intellect of college, wise.

The country's aggregated best —
Within a small and rugged space —
Give this community a test
To take advantage, strengthen pace.

It has a source of wit and skill
From its most generous, rich flow
Of men, world over, with strong will
To help all those who wish to know.

There is a chance to make good strife,
When Town and Gown in common pool
Can show the way of social life —
Exemplified by logic's rule . . .

In spite of climate, wild terrain,
To some the city is a dream
Of isolation, learning gain:
From Nature, books — with high esteem.

HISTORY MAKERS

The town has grown by wealth and deeds
 Of those whose strong incentive, will
Could overcome the urgent needs
 Of social life . . . and tasks fulfill.

The high ideas — first in trade
 And agriculture, use of soil
With all its treasures — long have made
 This city worthy of man's toil.

Some saw a chance to make a seat
 Of culture, turned a rugged hill
Into proud temples of elite —
 For training youth in any skill.

This set an era: measured pace,
 Directed emphasis on fame . . .
Appreciation of the place
 By those who brought it to acclaim.

Among the grateful residents
 Some pay respect with brush, or pen . . .
Describe old buildings, true events,
 And feats of each great citizen.

EPILOGUE

This is a small but pleasant town,
Enriched by views of scenic parks,
Embraced by hills, and lake — a crown
Of great distinction, guiding marks.

It has endowment to rely
Upon the culture, intellect
Of rival colleges near by —
Which all its livelihood protect.

The town with schools has common goals:
To give the World what they possess
In comfort, peace — far-reaching roles —
Exemplify well-aimed success.

It gives a grip for searching mind —
Among great books, and Nature's sights —
To be persistent, unresigned
In gaining knowledge which invites.

By its location, strong appeal,
The town is thus among the few
Which bring to all creative zeal —
Inspiring young and old anew.

POSTSCRIPT

*These sentiments have come about
Repaying debts to this small place,
To residents who have no doubt
That they enjoy a pleasant base.*

*These feelings show deep gratitude
For intellectual retreat,
A chance for lengthened interlude —
Productive, prudently discreet.*

*They give acknowledgment of facts
That there is always, on the Earth,
A niche which has untrodden tracts,
Which grant to efforts priceless worth.*

*They also sound a thankful note
To providence, the fortune stake —
From social pains to be remote,
To keep creativeness awake . . .*

*These thoughts may easily appear
The music of a happy man
Who aims to hold what is still dear —
Extract the best from his life-span.*

